



The Fairfax County Tree Commission  
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Jeffrey McKay, Chairman  
Dan Storck, Environmental Committee, Chairman  
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
12000 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, VA 22035

Sent by email to: [clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov)

**RE: Tree Commission recommendations on the *Staff Report on Landscaping and Screening*  
Provisions of Section 5108 of the Zoning Ordinance**

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors:

The Tree Commission (TC) wishes to supplement its letter of July 6, 2023 to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on the Proposed Landscaping and Screening Provisions of Section 5108 of the Zoning Ordinance. In that letter the TC supported the use of native evergreen and deciduous trees for landscaping and screening. The letter may be read here:

[https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/sites/publicworks/files/assets/documents/tree-commission-letter\\_landscaping-and-screening-proposals\\_7-6-23.pdf](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/sites/publicworks/files/assets/documents/tree-commission-letter_landscaping-and-screening-proposals_7-6-23.pdf)

Since our letter, and after the Tree Commission's monthly meeting on November 7, 2023, the staff issued a *Staff Report on Landscaping and Screening* dated November 15, 2023. In the staff report, the staff recommended the following:

**Vegetation**

1. Suitable existing vegetation, as determined by the Director, will be used to meet the requirements of this Section and the Public Facilities Manual.
2. Preference should be given to native species and environmentally tolerant species identified in the Public Facilities Manual.

The underlined language represents a change from the original proposal and is of concern to the Tree Commission. Overall, the Tree Commission supports policy that favors the use of native species to meet the County's canopy and resiliency goals. At the same time, we recognize that occasionally there may be situations where a non-native (non-invasive) tree may be better suited for certain conditions. Therefore, we support the amendment that the Planning Commission adopted at its December 6, 2023 public hearing, as follows, with the change underlined:

**“Preference should be given to native species, and environmentally tolerant species where appropriate for site conditions, as listed in the Public Facilities Manual.”**

The Planning Commission language limits the use of non-native species to when such species are appropriate for site conditions (for example, extreme pollution or excessively dry or wet conditions). The TC agrees with this limitation and recommends that the BOS adopt the Planning Commission amendment. In addition, we believe that such use should be an exception and not become the norm. We also suggest that the staff document the reason for use of a non-native species in its records. It would not be in the county’s interest to have streets with a monoculture of non-native trees, even if they are listed in the Public Facilities Manual. Instead, a diverse selection of trees that are environmentally tolerant is preferable.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the *Staff’s Report on Landscaping and Screening* and the Planning Commission’s amendment to the staff proposal.

Sincerely yours,

*Please email [TreeCommission@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:TreeCommission@fairfaxcounty.gov) for official signed version of letter.*

Cindy Speas, Chair  
Fairfax County Tree Commission

cc: Phillip Niedzielski, Chairman, and members of the Planning Commission  
Bryan J. Hill, County Executive  
Christina Jackson, Chief Financial Officer  
Tracy Strunk, Director, Department of Planning and Development  
Bill Hicks, Director, Land Development Services  
Christopher Herrington, Director, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services  
Leslie Johnson, Zoning Administrator, Zoning Administration Division, Department of Planning and Development  
Sara Morgan, Deputy Zoning Administrator, Zoning Administration Division, Department of Planning and Development  
Larry Zargoza, Chair, Environmental Quality Advisory Council  
Brian Keightley, Director, Urban Forest Management Division